



# Hackney Trade Union Support Unit

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# INTRODUCTION

# FROM THE POLICY GROUP CHAIR

This 2 year summary of the Hackney Trade Union Support Unit shows some, but by no means all of the wide range of activities that the unit has undertaken between April '88 - April '90.

During this period of time there has been two changes of personnel at the unit. Midge Purcell left in August '89 after 4 years at the unit and Sheila Robin departed in December '89 having been with the unit for 5 years. They have been replaced by Edddie Best and Gulan M. Kutluay. We would like to record our thanks to those workers who have left and the contributions that they made to the unit. The skills and experience of the new workers bodes well for the future of the unit and the continuity of its work. The continued attacks of the Tory government and employers upon the labour movement has shown the importance of the unit in countering this offensive. Locally the unit has continued its commitment to trade union organisation in the borough and has been especially active within the clothing industry and the fight against sweatshop conditions.

Through the unit's work in the clothing industry and support for the Kurdish refugees, there has been greater links made with the local Kurdish and Turkish communities which has also led to the introduction of a Turkish edition of Hackney Union News. This work has been a natural extension of the units involvement with anti-deportation issues and confirms the units commitment to anti-racist and equal opportunities work.

The unit has maintained its tradition of solidarity with those in struggle with support for groups of workers such as; dockers, civil servants, seafarers and ambulance and clothing workers. The importance of trade unionism has continued to be promoted through the unit's educational work. This has been carried out by instigating a number of courses and a new initiative of linking with local schools.

The health service is another area that has come under a sustained threat from the government. The production of a regular health bulletin has helped to provide information for local workers and users of the NHS about the attack on our health service as well as other health issues.

Local government has been one of the main targets of the government over the past 10 years. As cut-backs occur, funding continues to be a source of uncertainty for the unit. The support of the Policy Group, the Trades Council and the wider trade union movement will be needed to ensure that the valuable work of its local support and resource unit is not lost or diminished.

*G Baker*

Glen Baker, Chair of the Policy Group.

# HTUSU STAFF

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Sheila Robin, Development Worker  
joined November 1984 - December 1989

Mark Metcalf, Development Worker  
joined March 1988

Valerie Veness, Development Worker  
joined November 1987

Midge Purcell, Development Worker  
joined August 1985 - August 1989

John Lang, Development Worker  
joined March 1988

Eddie Best, Development Worker  
joined November 1989

Gulan M.Kutluay, Development Worker  
joined January 1990

Frank Ward, Administration/Finance Worker  
joined October 1986

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## POLICY GROUP and TRUSTEES

POLICY GROUP AS OF 31st MARCH 1990

Glen Baker	-	Trades Council Delegate
Imogen Radford	-	Trades Council Delegate
Tom Seabury	-	Trades Council Delegate
Maureen Taylor	-	Trades Council Delegate
Patrick Coleman	-	Trades Council Delegate
Peter Shields	-	Trades Council Delegate
Erik Rechnitz	-	Ex-Officio, President of the Trades Council
Tony Cordell	-	Ex-Officio, Secretary of the Trades Council
Rosie Newbigging	-	HCA Delegate
Barney Shuster	-	SERTUC Delegate
Alan Richardson	-	GLATC Delegate
Midge Purcell	-	HCRE Delegate

### TRUSTEES

Brian Sedgemore M.P.  
Ruth Elliot  
Dermott McNeill

### ADDRESS

Liberty Hall  
489, Kingsland Road,  
London,  
E8 4AU  
Tel. 071 249 8086 or 071 241 0943

# ADVICE INFORMATION & RESOURCES

The provision of physical resources is an important part of the support that the unit provides for the local trade union movement. Increasingly the unit has been used as a strike centre, with ambulance workers, housing assistants and seafarers all having used the unit whilst on strike. We are able to offer strikers office space, a telephone line, facilities for producing leaflets and bulletins, trade union contacts and a meeting room. Unit workers are also able to provide help and support if required.

All of the above resources are generally available for use by members of the local trade union and labour movement. The meeting room is used by a variety of local trade union branches and campaigning groups. The photocopier, duplicator, electrostencil, headliner and other facilities for producing leaflets and posters are all available for use at cost price. TUSU workers are always prepared to show people how to use the resources and help them produce effective material.

As well as organising courses specifically on the production of leaflets, the unit try to incorporate the production of leaflets into the general courses that are run. We show participants the simple methods involved in producing literature and publicity for the trade union movement and encourage them to use the unit for future projects.

The unit also provides information and advice to the trade union movement in Hackney. While the major areas of development work are covered elsewhere in this report, it should be said that a large amount of time is also spent on dealing with one-off requests for information and assistance. The type of information that is sought is varied. Common requests include advice about which union to join and areas such as contracts of employment, redundancy and dismissal.

Although we always give on the spot information, our normal procedure is to encourage callers to contact the appropriate trade union as we do not deal with individual casework. The unit recently produced a leaflet advertising our facilities which was circulated widely throughout the borough.

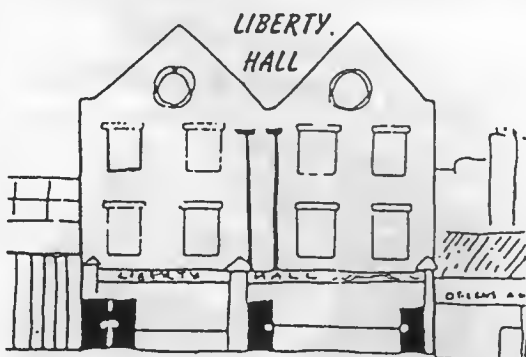
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## HACKNEY TRADE UNION SUPPORT UNIT

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Providing  
Support, Resources and Information  
to Workers and Trade Unions in Hackney

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## EXHIBITIONS

In addition to the two exhibitions which were mounted during the Trade Union recruitment week in May 1988 the unit also organised displays entitled, "Trade Unions Working For You" in four local libraries during March 1989 and supplied displays for the annual Cally Market Festival. The unit participated in this festival to ensure that trade unions were raised at two major days related to work. The unit provided an exhibition and stall at the "Women and Work" day and the "Employment Show".

## CUTTINGS

Extensive cuttings were taken from local and national newspapers concerning strikes. The P&O file, in particular, is highly developed.

In addition the unit now has considerable information on racism/anti-racism, fascism/anti-fascism in Hackney. Some of this was used by the anti-fascist magazine 'Searchlight' to compile a document for Hackney Council in December 1988.



# Hackney Union News

The unit has for a number of years produced & distributed in English a regular bulletin; Hackney Union News. From the middle of 1989 we have also produced a Turkish edition. This was in response to the increasing demands by local Turkish & Kurdish activists about the British Trade Union and Labour movement. The unit's work with the Kurdish Refugees (see elsewhere in this report) had highlighted our existence & seen new demands placed on us.

HUN is produced every two months and we have quite a well established distribution network, with many local trade unions taking a copy for their stewards. For example, Hackney NALGO takes 200, NUPE officers branch 99. The unit attempts to ensure that the majority, if not all, the articles in HUN are written not by us, the workers, but activists in the local trade union & labour movement. In addition since late 1989 we have started to include an international page.

## Hackney Union News

SWEATSHOP RECOGNITION  
SUCCESS FOR TGWU



by Mark Forcell.

The articles in the Turkish copies of HUN vary slightly from those in the English edition, with articles about workers basic rights such as income tax or contracts appearing within the Turkish HUN. The aim of the articles is to inform & to produce debate within the Trade Union movement. As a result the topics covered are varied and cover not only traditional trade union issues and activities such as pay claims, health and safety, protecting jobs but also abortion, refugees & policing.

Up until the middle of 1989 the unit had largely relied on distributing the 1,000 copies through the established trade unions in the borough. This meant, in practice, that most copies went to the council or teachers trade unions. The decision to produce HUN in Turkish led to a major re-think about this strategy. Firstly, we spent some time on ensuring that HUN was only being sent to those people who wanted it & secondly we decided that the Turkish HUN should be mainly distributed outside the local clothing sweatshops. We also give a significant number to the various community centres such as Day-Mer, Kurdistan Workers Association and the Union of Turkish Workers.

The addition to the unit of a Turkish trade unionist means we can now communicate with all the workers entering the sweatshops rather than before, just the English speaking ones. In total we print 1,200 in English & 2,500 in Turkish.

In late March 1990 we were approached by NALGO and two local NUPE branches with a view to sponsoring HUN. If any other branches or organisations would like to help then please contact the unit. Finally, if you would like to receive a copy of HUN or contribute an article or letter, then please contact us.

## HACKNEY SENDİKA HABERLERİ

Oktober/November

Adres: Hackney Trade Union Support Unit

TGWU'NUN GIYIM  
İŞLİKLERİNDE BAŞARISI



Mark Forcell.

Uzun ve Genel İşler Sendikası (TGWU) giyim  
işlerinde yeni başarılar kazanıyor.

Avrasya kıyafetleri için yapılan public  
hastanelerinde de büyük bir başarıya imza atıyor. Önce  
sadece bir kıyafet sendikası olan TGWU şimdi  
de bir başarıya imza atıyor.

100'den fazla de Londra'da çalışan çalışanlar bu  
başarıya imza atıyor. Şimdi TGWU'nun yepyeni bir  
başarıya imza atıyor.

# COMPANY INFORMATION

In 1988 TUSU launched its company information service. This has been of benefit for both unionised & non-unionised groups of workers. The information has been used in recruitment campaigns, fights against privatisation, wage bargaining situations and opposing redundancies.

Reliable information, which is relatively easy to obtain, can give workers the confidence to challenge management's arguments and win better wages and conditions.

The service is of value to workers in both the private and public sectors. Within the former, workers are often unsure about how well (or badly) their firms are doing. As a result it is often difficult to counter management's arguments about the 'need' for redundancies or a 'realistic' wage increase.

Using information from Companies House in Central London it is possible to find out a company's turnover, profits, dividends, the amount the directors get paid, investment etc. This information is supplemented by newspaper cuttings, sector reports & union publications.

## Success at Sainsbury's.

An example of how useful this can be came with the unit's involvement with the TGWU at the Dalston Sainsbury's store. Sainsbury's accounts showed a pre-tax profit of £308 million in 1987/8 & that each Sainsbury's full-time worker made a profit of £110 a week for the company. The TGWU had two opportunities to distribute its literature and talk to the staff during their dinner breaks of one hour.

Many staff at the store were very angry to discover that they were actually earning less per week than Sainsburys profit from their labour. Twenty four workers were recruited to the union and two shop stewards were elected.

## Fighting privatisation.

For public sector workers the threat of privatisation is a real one. Information on those companies involved in tendering for public sector contracts almost invariably shows that they pay low wages, ignore health and safety procedures and

provide worse services. It is possible to use company information to campaign against privatisation. The unit has developed extensive files on over 75 companies and it can be used by any workers fighting privatisation.

## Company account 1987/8

### J. SAINSBURY plc

	1987/8	1986/7
	(Year ends March 31st 1988)	
SALES	£4,791,500,000	£3,857,000,000
PROFIT BEFORE TAX.	£308,400,000	£246,000,000
HIGHEST PAID DIRECTOR.	£218,000	£190,000
DIVIDENDS TO SHAREHOLDERS.	£82,700,000	£48,900,000
RESERVE FUND	£445,000,000	£540,000,000
TOTAL NUMBER OF WORKERS (Full-time equivalent's)	54,188	43,809

### Profits up 25%

Shareholders get 25% more

D.J. Sainsbury got £14,154,000

from his shares

Anyone working 39 hours a week at

Sainsbury earned the company

£110 profit (ie £5,704 a year)

Further details: 01-249 8086 Hackney TUSU, 489 Kingsland E8 4AU

USING FIGURES FROM SAINSBURY'S ANNUAL ACCOUNTS, THE UNIT HELPED THE TGWU TO RECRUIT 24 WORKERS AT THE DALSTON SAINSBURY'S STORE IN APRIL 1988.

## Training course.

In February 1990 the unit organised a half-day session for local trade unionists and the new workers at the unit. Nine people, including the Trades Council secretary, participated in the course & we will look to do a similar course at some future date.

Anyone wanting information on their company or on a company involved in privatisation should contact the Support Unit as soon as possible.



## Trades Council Support

The unit maintains a computerised mailing list of the delegates to Hackney Trades Council, and carries out a monthly mailing on behalf of the Trades Council. The mailing is sent to all delegates and to the secretaries of affiliated branches. The mailing contains a wide range of information on matters of concern to the local labour movement.

A unit worker attends the monthly Trades Council meetings in order to keep the Trades Council informed of the work of the unit and to assist the Trades Council in its initiatives.

## LAY-OUT & DESIGN

### TGWU TAXI MEMBERS.

Keeping members informed is vital if trade union branches are to function successfully. This is one of the aims of the T&G cabbies who help produce & distribute their monthly union paper, 'Cab Trade News.'

It was with this in mind that the unit in January 1989 organised & ran a short session for TGWU members interested in acquiring & developing basic skills such as lay-out, editing, design & other practical skills required for producing a paper which is easy to read & understandable.

### Designing leaflets.

Throughout the year a number of people always remark that they would like to be able to improve basic skills such as designing and laying out a leaflet or newsheet. Thus, when 2 new workers started work in early 1990, the unit took the opportunity to run a half-day session on designing and laying out leaflets. Seven people from the local community attended & made the session enjoyable. Below is part of the leaflet which the Guinness Trust T.A. compiled after coming on the session. The unit is willing to run similar sessions in the future & you should contact us if you are interested.



National monthly paper of the cab trade

MARCH 1990

In addition the extensive mailing list which members had compiled was put on to a computer mailing list; thus making distribution of the paper quicker & more efficient.

### GUINNESS TRUST TENANTS ASSOCIATION

CAR PARKING?

POOR LIGHTING?

SECURITY?

PLAY AREAS?

MEETING YOUR

NEIGHBOURS?



HAVE YOUR SAY BY JOINING THE T.A

# SEAFARERS

For over 1 year striking seafarers from the P&O shipping company at Dover were using the Support Unit as one of their London bases. The strike began in February '88 following attempts by the company to impose 500 redundancies and to introduce new working conditions which would have dramatic effects on health and safety standards. This decision was taken less than one year after the ferry disaster at Zeebrugge.

The full force of the Government's anti-trade union laws were used to ensure that the strike did not spread. A national ballot of the National Union of Seamen's 21,000 members was cancelled in the wake of a court injunction threatening sequestration of the unions funds. However a strike by Sealink workers at Dover in support of their colleagues from P&O did take place and the unions assets were sequestered. After 9 days the union purged its contempt and all secondary action was called off.

Despite of their isolation, the strikers continued with their struggle. The unit in conjunction with the strikers regularly produced literature about the

strike which was widely circulated. The unit was the contact address for speakers and donations, all funds went directly to the Womens Support Groups from where it was controlled by the strikers themselves.

The unit also assisted with, setting up a local support group, organising a visit to Germany on behalf of the strikers, street collections, demonstrations at P&O's London HQ and in Dover, running a stall at the Hackney Show, production of a weekly strike bulletin, a Christmas appeal and numerous fundraising benefits and events.

Despite of great efforts support for the strike dwindled and gradually more and more strikers drifted away from the dispute. Eventually, in June '89 and against their wishes, a ballot of those members still on strike was taken and the dispute was called off. One active retired seafarer, Jack Williamson, has continued to be actively involved with the work of the unit.

## D.L.O.

In April '88 the then Secretary of State, Nicholas Ridley, announced in the House of Commons that the Direct Labour Organisation in Hackney was to be closed. This political attack was aimed at an organisation which had turned a £5 million loss in 1985 into a £0.5 million profit by 1988. The DLO also ran the largest craft apprenticeship scheme in the UK with a high local recruitment rate amongst women and the ethnic minorities.

The unit liaised with the convenors from the DLO assisting with the production of literature, supplying information about Conservative MP's with shares in companies involved with privatisation and providing general information about the poor record contractors have in local government.

In July '88 Hackney Council lodged a judicial review stating that Ridley's directive should be quashed on the grounds that he had acted both unlawfully and unreasonably. It came as no surprise when the two judges sided with the Government and the application was dismissed and costs awarded against the council. The council decided not to appeal against this decision.

## URGENT APPEAL!

SACKED NUS MEMBERS AND THEIR  
FAMILIES APPEAL TO THE TRADE UNION  
MOVEMENT FOR FOOD AND FUNDS  
CONTACT: THANET SUPPORT GROUP,  
LABOUR HALL, RAMSGATE, KENT.  
TEL 0843 587990





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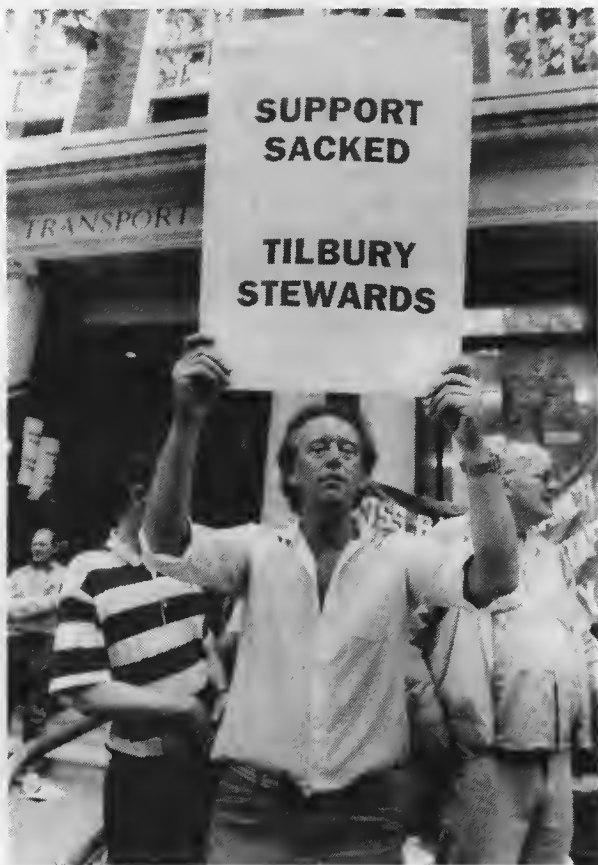
# DOCKERS

In April '89 the Government announced that they were to abolish the National Dock Labour Scheme. The scheme had been defended vigorously over the years by the dockers because it actually gave them some control over their own working lives. The Government and the Port Employers needed to break the organised labour at the docks to leave the way open for cheaper labour and increased profits.

A ballot was arranged but the threatened strike action became bogged down by the use of the anti-union laws with the Port employers attempting to have the ballot declared illegal and then appealing when that decision was lost. This appeal was upheld in favour of the employers which then led to the T&GWU appealing to the House of Lords. The law lords overturned the appeal judges decision but by this time the dockers had to re-ballot as the 28 day period for taking action on the original ballot had expired.

the workforce. At Tilbury 100 dockers, including all of the shop stewards, were sacked, the union was de-recognised and the remaining workers threatened with the sack if they did not return to work within two days. At Tilbury, many returned to work and a drift back to work began at other ports. Within a few days the strike was called off and many ports were left to fight in isolation. A major defeat for the labour movement had taken place.

The unit met with shop stewards from Tilbury before the strike took place and assisted with the production of literature and placards and supplying contacts in the local trade union movement. The unit also helped to form and participated in an East End Support Group. Sadly our last task was to produce and distribute material calling for the reinstatement of the sacked Tilbury dockers.



NIGEL TANBURN

The ballot result, in favour of strike action, was announced just a few days after the National Dock Labour Scheme was officially abolished. The strike began on July 11th with the port employers threatening sackings if action took place. It had taken three months to overcome the legal restraints and in that time splits had begun to appear amongst

## HOUSING ASSISTANTS

In April 1988 Housing assistants at New Islington and Hackney Housing Association went on strike. The assistants, members of MSF, took strike action following the managements attempts to impose a settlement of a regrading claim.

The unit was used as a strike HQ where picketing was organised, literature produced, meetings organised and support from other unions was gathered. Unit workers assisted with this work and regularly attended the picket line at Kingsland High Street.

After 7 weeks of strike action the management launched an attack on the union as a whole by insisting that before implementing any resolution to the dispute the union must accept limitations to its negotiating rights. Following this move the whole MSF union group at NIHHA took all out indefinite strike action in support of the Housing assistants and their union. Despite of attempts by management to intimidate pickets by use of the police and employing scab labour, the strikers refused to back down. After two weeks of all out strike action management were forced into negotiations and the Housing assistants were awarded the grade that they demanded and a back to work formula was agreed for all staff.

# AMBULANCE WORKERS

In September '89 ambulance workers rejected a 6.5% pay offer and began an overtime ban. In November, accident and emergency crews in London were suspended and the army and the police were sent on to the streets to carry out the ambulance workers jobs. Over the next few months massive support was to grow for the ambulance workers.

TUSU worked closely with the ambulance crews from Hackney and Dalston stations and also made contact with other ambulance workers up and down the country in an effort at linking areas and preventing isolation.

In early November, Hackney crews were at the forefront of organising a rally at Trafalgar Square. TUSU assisted with this task and helped with the production of leaflets (including Turkish leaflets) and organising speakers and the personal address system. Around 5,000 people attended the rally which had been organised at only 2 weeks notice.

## 999 EMERGENCY FAIR PAY FOR AMBULANCE STAFF

By this time TUSU was being used as a base to produce regular updated literature, badges, petitions and to build support for public meetings and fundraising events such as those held at Chats Palace and the Hackney Empire.

In late November the Hackney Joint Shop Stewards (Joint Unions) Committee called for strike action in support of the ambulance workers. This call was repeated in several other areas of London. The unit helped to build for the strike on December 6th. Several thousand people took secondary strike action and marches from South and East London descended on Euston for a rally at Friends Meeting House.

As in previous industrial disputes a local support group was formed and TUSU was to play a central role in the group which assisted with the regular street collections, leafleting and proposing and supporting activities. The unit also helped to organise a meeting of all London ambulance crews and support groups.



TUSU was involved in helping to build locally for both of the events called for by the TUC in January '90. The first, a "Public Assembly" at Trafalgar Square attracted more than 50,000 people. The second event called for people to show their support for the ambulance workers by coming out on to the streets for 15 minutes at noon on January 30th. In Hackney, an initiative by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, turned this event into HANDS ACROSS HACKNEY. People formed a human chain between Hackney and Dalston ambulance stations and at noon the chain was linked and people moved into the roads. Similar events took place in other parts of the borough and a rally was held at the Town Hall. It was estimated that between 8-10,000 people took part, the biggest demonstration in the borough for many years.

In February a two year pay deal was offered but a pay formula, one of the ambulance workers key demands, was refused by the Government and health service management. Despite of a lot of bitterness locally and in many other areas a ballot was held and the deal was accepted with the crews returning to work in March.

# BACTON FASHIONS

During February & March 1990 unit workers were involved with **strikers from one of the local sweatshops, Bacton Fashions.** The TGWU Textile branch 1/1312 had recruited a number of workers at the factory & in early February it had forced the boss to re-instate 20 sacked workers. However on February 14th the boss informed the trade union members in the factory that there was not enough work for all of them & that he would select different people to work different days. The following day the unit assisted the branch in organising an early morning picket of 80 local trade unionists. The factory was 'picketed-out' & this time the **boss agreed to give the workers their jobs back & also to sign a recognition agreement with the TGWU.**

Once again, however, he **broke his word** & day before the agreement was to be signed he **sacked 8 TGWU members.** Picketing re-commenced on Friday February 23rd & continued over the weekend. On Monday a further 12 workers, who had refused to cross the picket-line, were also sacked. On the evening the 100 strong picket was **attacked by members of the Bow Territorial Support Group, the Police Paramilitaries.** Unable to terrorise the crowd they resorted to grabbing 4 people & arresting them. Around 150 people picketed Dalston Police Station until 5am the following morning.



Only 10 workers crossed the picket-line on Tuesday February 27th & the factory was closed. Later it was put in the hands of the receivers & 100 workers lost their jobs. The boss was clearly prepared to go to any lengths to keep the union out of his factory! Later he issued a writ against the TGWU claiming loss of business but this was dropped.

On April 7th a demo of around 400 mainly Turkish & Kurdish workers was held in support of the sacked workers & the arrested four. The unit issued a press release & assisted with both the production & distribution of the demo leaflet. During the dispute we organised a defence fund for the sacked workers, worked closely with the TGWU Textiles branch secretary, issued press releases, translated leaflets into Turkish, arranged speakers for union branch meetings, assisted the solicitor in preparing the defence case for the 4 people arrested (all of whom face possible deportation if convicted) & offered advice & facilities to the strikers when asked.

The Bacton Fashions dispute graphically illustrates some of the difficulties in attempting to unionise & organise workers within the local Textile industry. The unit would like to thank all those people & branches who gave money and assisted on the picket line.



# FORD MOTORS

Hackney resident Mick Gosling, Chair of the TGWU 1/1107 branch at Fords Dagenham, was sacked shortly before Christmas 1988. Management claimed that he was dismissed for disciplinary offences, although he had no previous disciplinary record against him.

The managements case was destroyed in the appeal hearings. In particular the charge that he had been absent from his job when he chaired a branch meeting on Ireland with Bernadette McAllinsky was exposed as a sham. In the end however management refused the appeals and confirmed the sacking.

## UNDER PRESSURE

P.T.A. BUILDING SHOP STEWARD'S COMMITTEE

### RE-INSTATE MICK GOSLING

On Monday night the Assembly Plant Shop Stewards Committee held an emergency meeting to discuss the victimisation and sacking of Mick Gosling. We believe his sacking is a threat to every P.T.A. worker and an attack on the trade union movement in the plant. He has our whole hearted support.

Mick is a B Shift Sierra Line 3 operator. He is Chairman of the TGWU 1/1107 Branch. HE IS THE VICTIM OF A FRAME-UP. This is now being backed by a press smear campaign before the trade union appeal against his sacking is heard later this week.

THE REALITY IS THAT PRIOR TO HIS SACKING MICK GOSLING HAD NO DISCIPLINARY RECORD WHATSOEVER DURING TEN YEARS OF SERVICE WITH THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY.

So what's been going on?

Hackney Trade Union Support Unit workers supported Mick's campaign to win his job back. We had got to know Mick & stewards at the plant when we organised a meeting at Fords for P&O strikers from Dover and VSEL strikers from Barrow.

Whilst activists inside the plant agitated for strike action we tried to get the Trade Union & Labour movement to support Mick by writing to Fords management & their local MP's. We particularly drew to people's attention Fords support for shadowy organisations such as the Economic League. In an unprecedented move management began to stop the distribution of literature inside the plant & we were forced to rely on leafleting outside the factory.

Later we produced posters that were distributed in the Dagenham area calling on support for Mick. Letters of support, resolutions and requests for speakers also came flooding in. Support by groups campaigning around Ireland was perhaps greatest and many people noted how management had exploited the anti-Irish

hysteria which the Government had created by censoring any debate on Ireland.

Despite of many people's efforts Mick lost his job when the workers voted 63% to 37% not to strike. Mick was forced to go to an industrial tribunal where he was successful in his claim for unfair dismissal. Despite of this Mick still lost his job and was given just a small financial settlement.

## D.H.S.

In November '88 members of the CPSA and NUCPS from the Hoxton benefits office went on strike following managements attempts to impose work sharing arrangements. The Unit was used as a strike base and literature was produced about the dispute and meetings were arranged on behalf of the strikers. The Unit also organised a short session on how to address meetings. The strikers returned to work after 8 weeks with some, but by no means all, of their demands being met. The unit's involvement with the strike established much closer links between CPSA activists and the unit.

## ENGINEERS

In July '88 the Support Unit was visited by strikers from Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd in Barrow. 12,000 workers had been on strike for 2 months, the local population being 80,000, and yet there had been little or no coverage of their dispute which concerned the company's plans to impose fixed holidays and the erosion of health and safety conditions.

The unit arranged several newspaper interviews on their behalf, a strike bulletin was produced, fundraising literature was circulated, contacts were supplied and several meetings were arranged; including a factory gate meeting at the Fords Dagenham plant.

The bulk of the strikers returned to work after 12 weeks following withdrawal of support from the unions involved. However, 400 welders remained on strike for several more weeks and gained major concessions from the management especially with regard to health and safety.

# ANTI-DEPORTATION

The Unit has continued to play an active role in supporting local anti-deportation campaigns and to agitate for deportation/immigration issues to have much higher profile within the trade union movement. The approach of the Single European Act in 1992 has seen European countries moving towards a common immigration and refugee policy which will mean even greater restrictions on migrant labour and the formation of a "guestworker" system. This highly vulnerable workforce will have few basic rights and their exploitation will also undermine the whole labour movement.

For the vast majority of workers who receive deportation notices, there is little opportunity of a campaign on their behalf. Most are either deported immediately or held in detention centres for long periods of time. They have no chance to appeal and many work for non-unionised firms.

In Hackney, NALGO has been prominent in defending their members who have faced the threat of deportation. Marion Gaima had been in Britain for 10 years when she was told that she was to be deported to Sierra Leone. There she would face persecution because of her family's previous political involvement in that country. The unit played a prominent role in Marion's campaign, co-ordinating local activity, producing literature for the local trade union movement and organising public events including a national demonstration and fringe meetings at National Union Conferences in the summer of '88.

## STAND UP FOR MARION GAIMA'S RIGHT TO STAY IN THE UK...

Time is running out for NALGO member Marion Gaima. She has lived in this country for almost 15 years - but now the government says she has no right to stay, and must 'go home' to Sierra Leone. But Marion could face imprisonment, persecution or worse there because of her and her family's political beliefs.

Despite these dangers, the Home Office have persistently refused to grant Marion political asylum. On 22 July the High Court will hear her appeal against their refusal. If she loses, the government could move to deport her within weeks or even days.

Marion urgently needs your support. Join the lobby of the High Court that NALGO has organised for 22 July and tell the government - MARION GAIMA MUST STAY!



## ...JOIN THE LOBBY OF THE HIGH COURT ON 22 JULY.

Marion was refused political asylum but this decision was overturned by the Court of Appeal which ruled that the Home Office had made procedural errors in processing her claim and therefore her case had not been fairly considered. In March '89 the Home Office finally revoked the deportation order. After her ordeal, Marion stated that "However grateful I am for myself, I realise that there are hundreds of others facing deportation who have also made their lives here. I hope that my case has some positive impact on the fate of others."

## DEFEND GEORGINA'S RIGHT TO STAY!

### NALGO PETITION AGAINST DEPORTATION

We, the undersigned call on the Home Secretary to show compassion and revoke the deportation order on Georgina Addai and her seven year old son Festus.

Georgina came to Britain from Ghana six years ago. She is a NALGO member working for Hackney Council as an Assistant Officer in a residential home providing respite care for people with learning difficulties and people with physical disabilities.

Georgina wants to stay in Britain where she has her home and her friends. We urge consideration of her case on humanitarian grounds.

Within a few months Marion and TUSU were involved in the campaign of another Hackney NALGO member facing deportation. Georgina Addai came to Britain with her two year old son in 1984 because her husband was studying here. She was employed by Hackney council as a residential social worker. In 1986 Georgina's husband abandoned her and his studies. Georgina was granted a visa on a six monthly basis for the next two years but in 1988 the Home Office refused to make any further renewals of the visa. Hackney council applied for a work permit on Georgina's behalf and her solicitor requested that the Home Office consider further representations but in 1989 the Home Office told Georgina that they had considered her case and had decided to deport her-she is now appealing against that decision.

NALGO has been able to draw on the experience gained in Marion's case to initiate a campaign for Georgina against the blatantly racist immigration laws. As this report was going to print, Georgina was informed that she has been given a work permit for a further four year period.

# KURDISH REFUGEES

In March 1989 the Kurdistan Workers Association (KWA) opened an office very close to the unit & we began to plan a series of courses on employment rights and trade unions. However in April 1989 the first of almost 4,000 refugees from the Kurdish region of Turkey began arriving in Britain. They were seeking to escape from a region occupied by Turkish troops and where imprisonment, torture & death is, sadly, only too frequent. Many of the refugees bore the scars of torture and they had sold everything to pay for their flights. The large majority of them were from a peasant background & had little experience of living in a city.

Because of the existence of organisations such as the KWA, Halkevi community centre and the Union of Turkish Workers most of the refugees came to Hackney. The most urgent needs were money for food and a place to sleep. Urgent appeals to local trade unions obtained enough for the former and local churches responded by allowing many people to sleep in church halls. In early May, when 368 refugees had arrived, we issued an emergency appeal and set up, in conjunction with Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign, the Kurdish Refugees Support Group. Its aims were simple; to unite all those wanted to assist the refugees. Eighty people attended the first meeting including churches, political organisations, local councillors, community groups and trade unionists. The unit agreed to use one of its telephone lines as an emergency number and a number of people staffed it as offers of accommodation, bedding, clothing & toys etc, flooded in.

One worker from the unit, a qualified journalist, took on the role of the press officer. The unit also took on the role of co-ordinating the Trade Union sub-group; the role of which was to get speakers into union branch meetings and explain to workers why the refugees should be supported. Around 30 branches were addressed by a speaker from the sub-group. In the 4 months in which it existed the Support Group raised just under £13,000. A demonstration was organised on July 29th and over 5,000 people attended. The demonstration received considerable media attention.

The unit's involvement with the Kurdish Refugees was undertaken because of their desperate plight and the need for trade union involvement. The Home Office treated them disgracefully and was fully prepared to send them to Hackney without anywhere to sleep or without any money to feed themselves. The local agencies, and especially Hackney Council, was unable to cope with the numbers involved and we felt that we should help.

Our work was also an extension of our involvement with anti-deportation campaigns such as Marion Gaima and Georgina Addai. It also highlighted our existence to the refugees and Kurdish and Turkish workers in the local community. This had a spin-off effect in other areas such as recruitment & work with the TGWU Textiles branch 1/1312, the decision to publish Hackney Union News in Turkish, workers rights courses in Kurdish & Turkish community centres and the more general involvement and use of the unit by workers from these communities.

We would like to thank all those people who supported (and still do) the Kurdish Refugees and point out that any donations would still be appreciated and would be forwarded to the relevant associations.



# CONSTRUCTION

## S A F E T Y

### CAMPAIGN

The increasing numbers of injuries & deaths on building sites led to the formation in 1988 of the Construction Safety Campaign (CSC) by a number of activists in the construction industry. The unit workers have assisted the campaign whenever possible. Thus on a number of mornings workers have assisted in the distribution of leaflets outside a number of building sites. Sadly this has often been after occasions when workers have been killed or seriously injured. In 1988 160 construction workers were killed at work.



### *Your health ... Their wealth*

As part of Hackney Council's Irish Festival Week the unit worked with members of the CSC, the Direct Labour Organisation and the Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG) in organising a public meeting entitled 'Stop Murder at Work'. Extensive leafleting of dockland sites & local pubs/clubs took place. In addition there was publicity in some Irish papers & the Hackney Gazette. Displays were also mounted in Hackney Town Hall & videos were shown prior to the meeting. Speakers included MP's, CSC, IBRG & a full-time AEU officer. Deaths on site, long-term illnesses, the illegal use of 'blacklists' by many firms & pitiful fines against employers who cause the deaths of workers were amongst the many things highlighted at the meeting. Members of the CSC were pleased with both the meeting & the events leading up to it.

The Construction Safety Campaign can be contacted via Tony O'Brien at 72 Copeland Road, London SE16 1L1. Tel: 071-732-3711. Locally contact Tommy Finn on 081-986-0017.

# HGV DRIVERS

As a long distance lorry driver for many years trades council TGWU delegate George Sherman was increasingly frustrated about a lack of basic facilities for drivers.

Over the years there has been a reduction in overnight parking sites, accommodation and places to eat. In the London & South East region it is often difficult to even find places to have a wash. Such problems are generally ignored by local councils & the road transport authorities. It was these factors that led to the formation of the HGV Drivers Welfare Campaign. The unit assisted with the work undertaken and helped produce & distribute leaflets, health questionnaires and petition sheets.

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## LORRY/TRUCK DRIVERS

### DO YOU WANT?

Better parking sites?

Better cafe facilities?

More overnight accommodation?

**SO DO WE!**

---

Councils in London were written to & meetings took place in Lambeth & Southwark with Labour Councillors. Over 30 MP's replied to letters indicating their support.

More importantly the TGWU national paper for drivers 'The Highway' gave the campaign considerable publicity, with a 2 page centre spread in September's edition. The TGWU 'broad left' supported the initiative and various regional committees discussed the project. National Trade Group official, Jack Ashwell, wrote a letter of support and a meeting with him was arranged.

A number of South East region sites were visited & drivers were questioned about their concerns, persuaded to sign the petition & asked to take leaflets for other drivers. One site responded by banning us and saying they would call the Police next time. Petitions were returned from around the country and it is hoped that the TGWU will make the issue a major union campaign.



# NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

Despite of nationwide support for the National Health Service, reflected in the demonstration held in London in March '88, the government has continued its assaults on our health service. Legislation is being used in an attempt to drastically change the NHS, the nurses re-grading issue remains unresolved and hospital ward closures are common-place. Locally the Homerton hospital has failed, because of underfunding, to become the new "super" hospital that was promised and conditions at Hackney hospital continue to deteriorate.

Attempts to strengthen the local health shop stewards network have not been as succesful as anticipated. The unit has worked closely with the local health pressure group, Hackney Health Emergency. In conjunction with HHE, the unit helped to organise two public meetings to discuss the state of the NHS. The second of these meetings was attended by over 100 people and was used as a platform to launch Hackney's HANDS OFF OUR HEALTH SERVICE campaign. This campaign was set up in response to the Government's planned White Paper on the NHS. The White Paper signals the privatisation and eventual dismantlement of the NHS as we know it. Hospitals and Health Authorities have been encouraged to "opt out" of the NHS and become self governing. City and Hackney District Health Authority have already expressed a willingness to "opt out". The Hands Off campaign has carried out extensive lobbying and leafleting to ensure that no such moves are made without full consultation and a ballot of staff and users of the NHS.

In an effort to stimulate debate and encourage activity within the NHS, the unit initiated a regular health bulletin, SCAN. The bulletin, which is aimed at both users and workers within the local health service, has covered both local and national issues and has been particularly useful in supplying information concerning the effects of the Government's White Paper proposals and its effects on the NHS and the local community.

If you would like more information about the HANDS OFF campaign, then please contact the Support Unit on 071-249-6930.



# NURSERY WORKERS

Following requests from the convenor a five day Health and Safety Course for NUPE nursery workers in the voluntary sector was organised and run during May/June 1988. Eight women workers, including 5 safety rep's/shop stewards, attended the course.

A large range of problems including overcrowding, lack of training, asbestos, poor lighting, badly designed buildings and stress were identified by the workers. Work was undertaken on developing the skills and confidence of these workers to begin to tackle some of these problems.

Thus the course combined practical skills such as letter writing, designing posters and talking with management with an examination of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Safety Representatives and Safety Committee's Regulations 1974 plus other pieces of legislation.

Practical exercises such as getting the representatives to inspect Liberty Hall were similarly combined with 'homework' involving the rep's inspecting their own workplace.

On return to work the representatives continued to keep in touch with the unit and to ask for advice when required.

NUPE members

## NURSERY WORKERS

### HEALTH & SAFETY COURSE

Five Wednesdays from May 18 th

at Hackney Trade Union Support Unit,

489 Kingsland road E8

#### Topics will include:-

- Identifying problems
- Obtaining information
- Equal Opportunities
- Skills learning
- Safety rep's/ members rights
- Stress
- Local Government cuts
- Meeting new people!

Open to all NUPE nursery workers

Time off with pay has been agreed

Book early to avoid disappointment!!!

## LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS

Following requests from a number of unions (both private and public sector) for information on a whole range of changes on new laws that would affect local trade unionists, the Support Unit arranged six briefings, with guest speakers, to discuss their implications.

The topics covered were;

THE HOUSING ACT

ABOLITION OF THE ILEA

CHANGES TO PENSIONS LAW

COMPULSORY COMPETITIVE TENDERING

NEW LAWS ON IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY

POLL TAX AND BUSINESS RATES

to highlight the issues involved for Hackney shop stewards and activists. A total of 49 local trade unionists and community activists attended one or more of the briefings and the average attendance was 15 at any one session. We are grateful for the assistance provided by the full time officials from the TGWU and NUPE and to various campaigns and organisations such as London against the Poll Tax, The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and others.

## TUC COURSES

The input of unit workers into the TUC's course programme has declined over the year, although the TUC has continued to use Liberty Hall as a venue for its courses. A leaflet advertising the January - March itenary was produced by the unit and circulated widely to local unions and contacts. A unit worker co-tutored the tackling racism course held in February.



The general format was for a specialist speaker to introduce the legislation and its reasons, followed by a trade unionist

# "POINTS OF INFORMATION"

"POINTS OF INFORMATION"



A SHORT COURSE FOR **WOMEN**  
ON  
**HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE IN MEETINGS**

Covering speaking, jargon, procedures, chairing and all you need to know to break through the formalist structures in Trade Unions, Tenant Associations and other organisations and committees.

6.00pm - 8.00pm  
Eight Thursdays starting 4th June  
Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, E.8.  
(near Dalston Junction)

Enrolment 5.30pm Thursday 4th June	<small>Course fee 10 Concessions 11.50 For more information visit us again at 241 1741</small>	Childcare <small>help with baby sitting requests available.</small>
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HACKNEY WEA Hackney Trade Union Support Unit

There was a gap in the regular provision of the Points of Information course, due to one of the workers absence from the unit temporarily on maternity leave. However on her return, work on publicising the course commenced. This involved mailings to local trade unions and organisations and articles in the local newspapers.

This short course for women on how to be effective in meetings covers speaking, jargon, procedures, chairing and all women need to know to break through the traditional structures in the organisations that they are involved with. As in the past, there was much interest in the course from women in Hackney. On this occasion 18 women registered and all but 4 completed the course.

Although the course is not specifically a trade union course it does attract women wanting to become more involved/effective in their union branches. Additionally as many of the examples used are from the trade union movement, this generally creates an atmosphere where trade union issues and structures are discussed, thus opening up the area for those participants who may not be active within their unions.


Those taking part included members of the following unions; UCATT, NALGO, NUPE, COHSE, CPSA, MSF and ACTSS. As well as

trade unions other organisations represented included, Community Nurseries, Working womens organisations and the local allotment society! As on previous occasions during the course there was continuous positive feed back about how women were finding skills and confidence they had gained on the course useful in the organisations that they were involved in.

## EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

The unit attempted, in February 1990, to organise and run a course on employment rights for workers in non-union workplaces. It was hoped to attract people to 3 evening sessions & emphasis that the only way to achieve your rights was by organising yourself in a trade union.

Hackney Trade Union Support Unit



Tell the Pharaoh that unless we get contracts of employment, wage slips, decent health & safety, freedom from sexual/racial harassment, rights for part-timers, holidays, redundancy pay & trade union representation then he gets no pyramids!

3 SESSIONS on EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS at LIBERTY HALL  
489 KINGSLAND ROAD E8

We printed 3,000 leaflets and distributed them outside railway stations, local shops, dole offices and colleges. We also placed them in the Citizens Advice Bureau, community centres, libraries and the Law Centre. In doing so, we received a number of general queries about employment rights and unions.

Sadly, only 5 people registered for the sessions. Some follow-up work was involved and contacts between the workers and different agencies were made. Naturally we were disappointed about the numbers who turned up but believe that the exercise was useful as it widely publicised the unit and its work, informed many people about some of their employment rights and it allowed us to discuss trade unions with a small number of local workers.

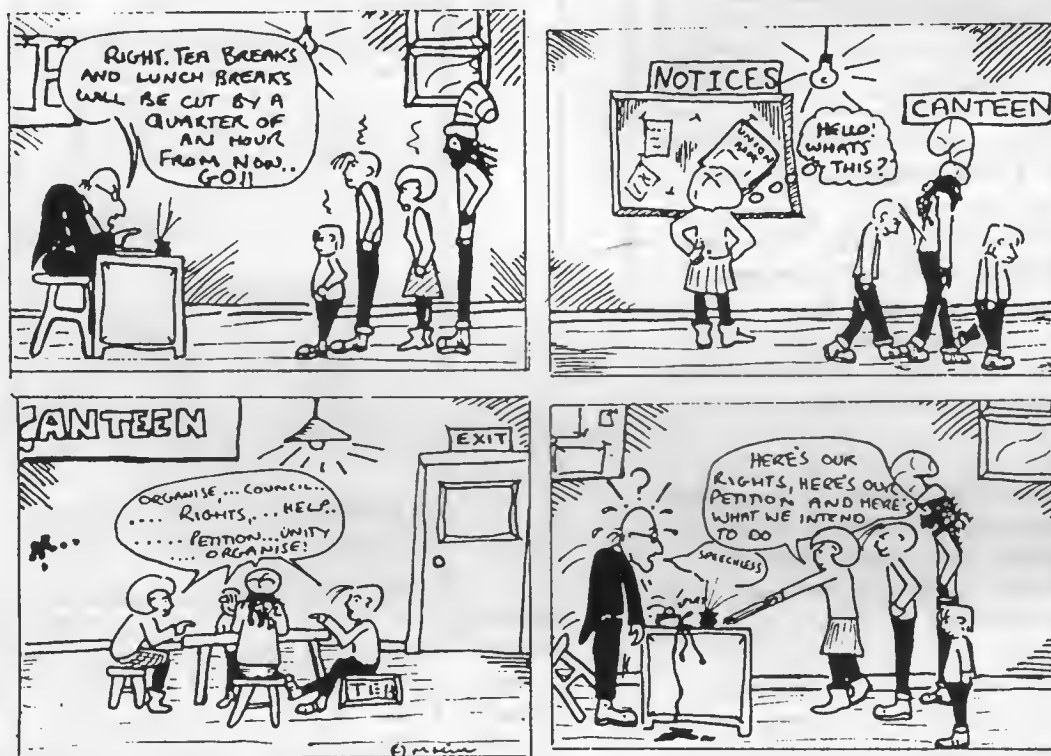
# SCHOOLS

Young people are the trade unionists of tomorrow. However at school & college they very rarely have the opportunity to look at and discuss the issue of workers employment rights and how trade unions can help get them. It was with this knowledge that the unit began in the 1989 Spring term to organise and run sessions in schools and colleges on the issue of Trade Unions.

At the same time we also wanted to involve local trade unionists in running the sessions and thus **take trade unionism out into the local community**. We thus contacted a number of people to see if they were interested and we received a reasonable response.

This allowed us in the spring and summer terms to organise sessions in Hackney College and four schools; Clapton girls, Homerton boys, Haggerston girls and Skinners girls. Over 500 young people were involved.

Most sessions were for one hour and the aim was to get the students to actively participate in a variety of exercises, quizzes and role-play. Literature from different unions was obtained and made available for all students and the Youth Training Scheme booklet 'Schemewise', produced by Birmingham YETRU, was especially well received and is recommended for any young person wanting to know their rights. It is free to all young people or 15 pence to local trade unionists. Contact us if you want a copy.



Youth Employment Training Rights Unit, Birmingham.

Local trade unionists accompanied workers to virtually all of the sessions and on a number of occasions they ran the sessions themselves. On one occasion, at Clapton, we ran 5 sessions of one hour all at the same time. Six local trade unionists were involved.

Over the Summer we took the opportunity to update some of the classroom materials and decided to concentrate our time and resources at 2 schools; Skinners and Haggerston. The sessions at the latter were extended to 2 hours and have allowed us to give much more information about trade unions.

Local trade unionists have actively participated in assisting, organising and running all the sessions. Many thanks to them, especially Michael McDermott(GMB) and Tash Shifrin (NUS). Trade Unionists can assist the trade union movement of the future by involving themselves in their local schools and assisting young people to see the benefits of trade unionism.



# NANNIES & AU PAIRS

All the workers at TUSU belong to **TGWU/ACTSS** and last year we recruited to our branch a **young woman who was working as a nanny** for a family which owns a contract cleaning company. For a number of months she urged us to try and carry out a recruitment campaign amongst other nannies and au-pairs. Whilst there are no official employment figures, this group of mainly women workers must total many thousands. Thus in September 1989, after consultation with the TGWU about what the union could offer to nannies and au-pairs, we held an informal meeting at Liberty Hall. Prior to the meeting we leafleted a whole range of places such as the 'One o'clock clubs', Highbury and Islington Tube Station, playgrounds and toddlers clubs. We also put posters in local community centres and adverts were placed in City Limits, Loot, Time Out and the Hackney Gazette. BBC TV also approached us for information.

## NANNIES & AU PAIRS

IS THIS YOU?

1. NO WRITTEN CONTRACT.
2. LOW WAGES.
3. NO JOB DESCRIPTION
4. LONG HOURS.
5. NO INSURANCE COVER.
6. ISOLATED FROM OTHER WORKERS.
7. SEXUALLY HARASSED BY YOUR EMPLOYER



COME & DISCUSS HOW WE CAN IMPROVE THINGS

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH 7PM

AT LIBERTY HALL,

489 KINGSLAND ROAD E8

Four nannies attended the meeting and discussed their common problems such as no contracts, low wages, sexual harassment by employers, isolation from other workers and poor working conditions. They agreed to stay in touch with one another and one English nanny was able to assist a Turkish au-pair with an immigration problem.

**Nannies, au-pairs and other homeworkers are amongst the most exploited sections of the community and the unit would like to see much more being done to organise them within Trade Unions.**

# WORKERS WITH DISABILITIES

In August 1989 the unit was approached by 2 members of Hackney Association for the Disabled (HAD). One of them, Jack Varnham, had been informed about a vacancy for a carpenter by Islington job centre. He was **refused the job** on the grounds that "due to the vacancy being on a large construction site we cannot take Mr Varnham on due to the safety factors on this site."

However the real reason was **because Jack is deaf and dumb**. The company ignored his 30 years experience on both private and public enterprises; and to compound the issue the Job Centre would not protest against what had happened as they saw Jack's case as "fairly typical for most disabled people."



The unit, on Jack's behalf, wrote a number of **letters of protest** to the Job Centre, the firm, local MP's & councillors and even Margaret Thatcher. We involved Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North, and he **raised the issue in the House of Commons**. The Construction Safety Campaign also wrote letters of protest and Keith Warren from HAD was one of their speakers at the campaign's meeting in the House of Commons in October 1989. A leaflet was prepared and circulated to trade union & community groups.

## Disability officer.

Jack Varnham became aware of our existence through our working relationship with Patrick Coleman. Patrick is a member of our Policy Group and is the Disability Officer for **Hackney Council unions joint works committee**. In June & July 1989 the unit assisted Patrick to develop policy proposals for the joint works on a variety of topics including women, black members and members with disabilities.

# CLOTHING

The largest single group of private sector employers in Hackney are the wide variety of garment and clothing manufacturers. Traditionally these workplaces have contained the largest numbers of immigrant and non-English speaking labour and the vast majority of production line workers are women. Contrary to popular mythology, these industries are neither small scale nor declining. Currently, around 15,000 people work in this sector in the Hackney area and it is both profitable and expanding. Many major retail outlets in the West End of London and the high streets are supplied from firms in Hackney and neighbouring boroughs.

Following some initial success, the TGWU formed the 1/1312 clothing workers branch which organised in many different workplaces. The Support Unit has assisted with the production of literature in Turkish, providing meeting rooms, leafleting workplaces, seeking support from other unions and organising a series of briefings.

The objectives of the briefings, concerning basic trade unionism and rights at work, was to develop the skills of the Branch Committee and shop stewards in the new branch. The briefings took place at Liberty Hall and were run by a unit worker. As many of the participants



NEIL MARTINSON

The garment workers unions began originally amongst the Jewish and East European workers in the East End of London and have maintained a precarious toe-hold in most parts of the area. Recently, the Transport and General Workers Union have begun a recruitment drive as part of its "Link Up" campaign. The largest ethnic group involved locally are people of Turkish and Kurdish origin. Both the Support Unit and the TGWU sought the assistance of a number of local community organisations with the recruitment campaign.

were not fluent in English, the course was run in both Turkish and English. Materials were translated in advance and interpreters (members of the group) translated during the sessions as necessary. The briefings held covered the case for trade unions, the job of a union rep and the role of the union.

The 1/1312 branch has waged a number of campaigns for unionisation at local factories. It secured a recognition agreement at Dizzies, only to then see  
(continued on page 21)

# CLOTHING

the firm shut down and relocate. It also recruited a number of workers at Bacton Ltd. Stoke Newington, where management harassed the union and provoked a strike. After a series of bitter picket line clashes, the firm closed down and re-opened in Westgate St. (see separate article) Homerton, minus its existing workforce. The tactic of closure and re-location will require the unions and TUSU to consider strategies to overcome this problem.

A number of meetings and rallies have been organised under the title "Unionise the Sweatshops". This has included a meeting with unions and ethnic groups from neighbouring Islington to co-ordinate work. TUSU has played a key organising role in bringing together local unions, community groups and other people to facilitate this work.

## TRADE UNION RECRUITMENT WEEK

A Trade Union Recruitment Week was held in May '88. Due to the demise of the local Trade Union Forum - a body made up of the private sector unions and Hackney's Economic Development Unit- the week did not receive the level of support that had been shown in the previous year.

## TRADE UNIONS Working for you!



The unit produced two exhibitions which were displayed firstly at Hackney Town Hall and subsequently at Central and Shoreditch libraries. 5,000 leaflets and 250 posters were produced as well as a special leaflet on behalf of the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers. Despite of the lower level of participation by private sector unions a number of workers were recruited. These were mainly in the Co-op sector.

# FOOTWEAR

There are a lot of small factories in Hackney producing shoes and leather goods (e.g. handbags) and the unit has been developing work with NUFLAT, the National Union of the Footwear, Leather and Allied Trades.



Statistics on employee numbers in local footwear and leather goods workplaces have been updated by the unit and five laminated panels were produced for the union as part of a recruitment campaign. NUFLAT supplied a selection of prints from which several photographs were selected and used as part of the final display. The unit also produced two posters for the union. One was specifically aimed at women and the other advertised the legal services offered by NUFLAT. Discussions have been held with the union's Full Time Official, who covers the Hackney area, with a view to holding a local union recruitment campaign.

## PENSIONERS

In August 1989 the unit was approached by the Greater London Pensioners Association (GLPA) to assist with the possible development of trade union retired members associations.

The unit, on their behalf, wrote to most of the national & local trade unions requesting information on their policies and local pensioners contacts. We also circulated materials and a petition to other support units & trade councils; calling for a number of things including a large increase in pensions & retention of the free bus pass.

Talks between two local branches & the GLPA led to the formation of the Hackney NALGO retired members association & the possibility of a NUPE association as well.

# KESSLERS PLASTICS

Following an approach by 2 Indian workers at Kesslers Plastics factory in Stratford the unit, along with TGWU officer Brian Theobald, was involved throughout 1989/90 in a year long campaign to try and unionise the 170 workers there.

Kesslers is a fairly modern plant & the company is profitable. However workers in the moulding shop, all of whom were black, had at the beginning of 1989 a take-home pay of just over £110 a week for 40 hours. Women workers, black and white, in the production department also earned similar levels of pay. White male workers could expect to earn much more but compared to the 4 directors average salary of £67,500 per year then no worker was doing particularly well!

In the moulding shop there were 2 main ethnic groups, Indian and Pakistani. There was some hostility between the groups and the Indian workers wanted to try and overcome this, before trying to talk to other workers about joining a union.

The unit made contact with the Pakistani Workers Association(PWA) and after discussions with them a leaflet, in the mother tongue language, was produced and secretly distributed to the Pakistani workers in the factory. A meeting was arranged at which 9 workers attended & agreed to try and persuade other workers to join the TGWU.

Informal discussions with other workers demonstrated an interest in the union, but very few workers were actually willing to sign the application forms. The unit, along with the full-time union officer, continued to hold meetings with the 6 or so activists within the plant.

In the latter part of 1989 they requested that we carry out a **factory gate leafleting session**. The first leaflet used the companies accounts to show that with pre-tax profit of £436,000, Kesslers Plastics Limited could easily afford to improve wages and working conditions.

A TGWU information pack was produced and distributed which included leaflets on women in the union, health and safety and basic details about joining. It included a stamped addressed envelope and invited workers to a meeting at the TGWU Stratford offices. To counter this

management threatened to shut the factory if the "union got into the plant". They also promised that a decent wage rise was to be announced "in the very near future". It was the traditional 'carrot and stick' approach! Only 3 new people attended the meeting.

## KESSLER WORKERS

Do you know that the last published accounts for 1987 show that:-

SALES WERE £8,630,000.

PROFITS WERE £436,000.

THE DIRECTORS GDT £275,000.

DIVIDENDS TO SHAREHOLDERS WERE £63,000.

ONE DIRECTOR GOT A £103,000 TAX FREE LOAN.

IT COST £512,000 TO RENT THE FACTORY. THIS WENT TO KESSLERS INVESTMENT LIMITED.

A DEBT OF £78,000 FROM ANOTHER KESSLERS FACTORY WAS FORGOTTEN ABOUT.

PROFITS WERE THEREFORE MUCH HIGHER THAN £436,000

ISSUED BY TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS UNION, 43 WEST HAM LANE E15. (tel: 534-4187.) ASK FOR BRIAN THEOBALD.



## JOIN THE TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS UNION

One week later the workers were called to a mass meeting and told that the pay rise was 8.5% (it was 3% in the previous two years) and that from January 1st 1990 the overtime rates would increase to time and a half, holiday entitlements would rise from 17 to 20 days per year and that shift allowances would be paid when workers were on holiday.

In late January we did a further leafleting session and pointed out that the increases which were given were because the company was desperate to keep the TGWU out & stop the workers further improving their wages & conditions. It has now been left to the activists inside the plant to continue to try and get people to join the union. The unit remains in contact with them.

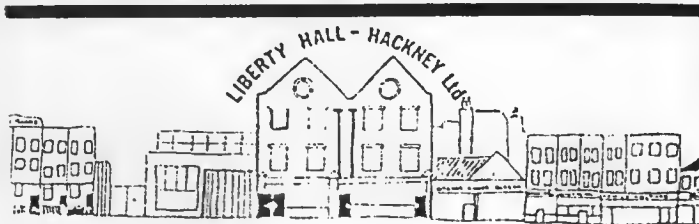
We would like to thank Brian Theobald, TGWU officer, and the Pakistani Workers Association. (They can be contacted by writing to:- PO Box 1658, London NW2 6AW).



# EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

The decision by the 1988 TUC Congress to boycott the **Employment Training Programme (ET)**, was denounced by the Tories & the media as 'letting down the unemployed'. In truth the opposite was the case & it was with this in mind that the unit produced a 4 page bulletin entitled 'What about the Unemployed?' for distribution around the local trade union movement & community organisations. This examined ET and the Governments other measures for the unemployed & concluded that there is a determined move towards a compulsory workfare scheme.

Additionally leaflets were produced aimed at those registering as unemployed & those on ET schemes. These leaflets were distributed outside dole offices & ET placements by workers from the unit & a small number of local trade unionists. The first was aimed at persuading people not to go on ET & the second at getting people to quit their ET schemes. As the Government had said the scheme was voluntary we also obtained letters from local dole office managers to clarify this. This proved useful for 2 claimants who were threatened with their benefits being withdrawn because of refusing to go on ET.



## Liberty Hall

The Hackney Trade Union Support Unit occupies the top floor of a large converted building near Dalston Junction - Liberty Hall. The unit shares the building with The Hackney Anti Deportation Campaign, Hackney Community Accountancy Project and Hackney Employment Agency, Training and Unemployed Project. The building is managed by a company, all of whose directors are members of the management committees of the occupying groups. The Trade Union Support Unit Admin worker administers the affairs of the company. This includes handling the finances, ensuring that the legal requirements of the lease are complied with and servicing the meetings of the directors.

The building contains facilities which are used by local trade unionists. A well furnished meeting room containing a range of audio visual aids is used for meetings and courses. The room is used on a regular basis by union branches and community and campaign groups. The building was originally acquired by the GLC in 1982 to provide accommodation for grant-funded organisations in Hackney. With the demise of the GLC the freehold of the building passed to the London Residuary Body, who in April '89 sold the building to a property company. The five year lease that Liberty Hall had on the building expired in March '89. Under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act we have an automatic right to renew the lease, provided we can pay the rent. The rent level on the new lease will be based on the going rate for commercial rents in the Dalston area of Hackney. At the time of writing negotiations about the new rent level are still proceeding.

## WHAT WILL EMPLOYMENT TRAINING MEAN TO YOU?



LEARNING NOTHING  
WHILE  
EARNING NOTHING

Meanwhile, together with Hackney Council for Racial Equality, we obtained permission to visit a number of ET schemes to talk with the workers there. However shortly before the first visit our invitation was withdrawn by the Training Commission. Later in the year the unit & members of the Unemployed Workers Charter produced a leaflet attacking Sainsbury's decision to participate in ET. This was distributed outside the local Sainsbury's store one Saturday morning as part of the South East Anti-Workfare Movement's day of action against ET. The Sainsbury workers were also given leaflets.